

EUROKA STATION PARTNERSHIP

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IMPACTS OF NATIVE VEGETATION AND BIODIVERSITY REGULATIONS
- PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
DRAFT REPORT
PUBLIC HEARINGS, ALBURY, FEBRUARY 11, 2004

We made written and short verbal Submissions at Deniliquin on July 11, 2003 and the former was allocated Number 167 by the Productivity Commission.

In the time that has elapsed since nothing has happened which would make us want to change the contents of submission Number 167. Accordingly, our comments here will be confined to matters relating to the Plains Wanderer bird and their possible impacts on parts of the Draft Report as follows:

ACCURACY OF FUNDAMENTALS

On January 16, 1987 twenty three properties totalling about 400,000 hectares in the Conargo, Jerilderie and surrounding districts were partly and totally burnt by a bush fire. All but 11 hectares of Euroka Station was very severely burnt and the consequent loss of native animal and bird habitats was high or complete.

David Baker-Gabb, a consultant to Birds Australia and various Government Departments and/or Services has stated that once subject to bush fire the Plains Wanderer never returns to its former habitat.

In the years since the 1987 bush fire the country generally, its natural, native vegetation and various habitats have been re-established and the Plains Wanderer is back on Euroka and various surrounding properties. Notwithstanding we've been subject to "bird recovery" inspired restrictions where on-farm developments are concerned with negative financial impacts resulting. Accordingly we question the worth of recovery plans built on questionable scientific assumptions.

BIRD POPULATION AND TOURISM

For a number of years advertisements for Plains Wanderer sighting tours have appeared in Birds Australia publication Wingspan and on the 'net.

We are concerned about the accuracy and impartiality of the advertised claims for these bird sighting tours and alarmed by the contribution they may make to economically restrictive practices introduced in the Conargo, Jerilderie and surrounding districts. Tourism may have increased slightly but we doubt that the additional income created to date would be greater than negative impacts on farm incomes as a consequence of "bird recovery plans".

IMPACT ON OVINE SKIN VALUES OF H C V AREAS

Australia is one of the largest producers and the world's largest trader of ovine skins. The quality and value of skins is affected substantially by seed infestation. The main culprit notably corkscrew grass seed is grown predominantly on sparse, red grassland country which many "experts" consider the preferred habitat of the Plains Wanderer and therefore of High Conservation Value. Depending on seasonal conditions we know that Plains Wanderer birds frequent most types of Riverina terrain.

Bird Recovery plans which enhance the growth and spread of corkscrew grass where sheep and lambs are also grazed will ultimately impact very negatively on the values of ovine skins, farm incomes and Australian exports!

JOHN R WEBB
Partner